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BY THE

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"THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IN ITS RELATION TO
THE CHRISTIAN PEOPLE"



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The Christian Ministry in its Relation to the Christian People.*

BY THE REV. J. P. SHERATON, D.D.

To what higher and nobler vocation can man be called than to the Christian ministry—a ministry which has its source and ground in Christ himself—a life-work severed as far as possible from merely worldly interests, and devoted exclusively to the service of humanity after the example of the Son of Man;—a blessed mission of love and reconciliation, to bear witness to God's character and claims, and to win for Him man's love and obedience. In the very dignity of the work lie its dangers, when men, who seek it, fail to realize its true character, or when they are misled by false conceptions of its nature and purpose.

History unmistakably shows us that no error has worked more disastrously than that which exalts the ministry to a position essentially hostile to its mission and destructive of its proper functions. The colossal despotism of the pre-Reformation Church was built upon the self-seeking perversion of the Divine order, by which the ministry was estranged from and lifted up above the people, and made to be, as Dorner pertin-

* A lecture delivered by the Rev. Principal Sheraton at the annual Convocation of Wycliffe College, held on the evening of Thursday, the 10th of October, 1889.

ently observes, its own end and highest good ; while the laity derived their chief value from the fact that they were conceived to exist simply for the aggrandisement of the hierarchy. The questions involved in this discussion are no mere external and subordinate ones, relating simply to Church polity and order. They penetrate to the inmost core of saving and essential truth. By the sacerdotal error not only is the doctrine of the Church perverted, but the Gospel itself in its most fundamental teachings, is changed and corrupted.

It is not to be wondered at that the corruptions of Christendom, and the false exaltation of the ministry, should have opened the way to a reactionary depreciation of its claims and value, disclosing itself in two opposite tendencies, both of which are alien to the spirit of the Reformation and the teachings of the Reformed Churches. On the one hand, we have a false Protestantism, unspiritual and external, intellectually, or often merely socially and politically, liberated from sacerdotal thralldom, but still destitute of the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. And on the other hand there was developed a false spiritualism, manifesting itself in various forms, but always tending towards an exaggerated individualism, and subversive of constitutional order in Church government and of harmony and co-operation in Church work. But both these errors carried within themselves strong counteractive tendencies, and neither of them has been productive of such deplorable and destructive mischief as has been wrought by sacerdotalism.

For all these misconceptions and perversions there is but one remedy. We must take our stand upon Reformation ground, and make our appeal as did the Reformers to those fundamental Church principles which are revealed in the Divine word, and illustrated and vindicated in the Divine workings ; and

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which can only be ascertained and understood by means of the reverent study of the Scriptures and the critical investigation of history.

There are two propositions in which all will at once acquiesce—the ministry is a Divine institution, and it is a necessary institution of the Christian Church. But we will find that these statements are often affirmed in very different senses.

The Christian ministry is Divine. It is the Ordinance of God and the creation of the Holy Spirit. But there are those who limit the word "Divine" to their own meagre, mechanical, and external conception of the Divine working, and who do not hesitate to assert that those who question their theory dishonour and repudiate the Divine ordinance.

The Christian ministry is a necessary institution of the Christian Church. And this necessity lies not only in the fact that God has made it generally necessary in the constituted methods in which He manifests His mercy unto men; but also in man's social and political constitution which is not antagonized, but transformed by Christianity, as well as in the spiritual fellowship which it is one of the primary objects of the Gospel to establish. In life itself, be it physical, political, or spiritual, there lies the necessity of organization. Only in the lowest and crudest forms of being are the functions of life discharged by the whole body, without any special differentiation. But whenever we pass beyond these we find the provision of special organs to discharge special functions. The same progress is seen in the development of man's social and political life; and the same law prevails in the growth and progress of the Church of Christ.

The necessity of the ministry was asserted emphatically by continental Reformers and by Anglican divines. Calvin compares it to the fruitful influences of the sun and the needful

aliment of the body. Our own Hooker (E. P. V., 76) affirms that "religion without the help of a spiritual ministry is unable to maintain itself." Yet Hooker's emphasis is laid not upon the external form, but upon the vital inwardness of a truly spiritual ministry. For an unspiritual ministry has been the greatest curse and drawback to the Church.

But while we strongly maintain that the ministry is necessary to the well-being of the Church, it is not essential to its being. It relates to the *bene esse*, not to the *esse*. It is not necessary in the sense that salvation cannot be had nor the Church exist apart from it. It is the ministry which depends upon the Church, and not the Church upon the ministry. Just as in human society, the whole body of the common wealth is the basis and ground of all offices and functions. While the latter minister to its well-being, they derive their existence from its life and authority. So also is it in the spiritual and religious fellowship, the common wealth of the Church of Christ.

Here we are compelled to join issue with the sacerdotalists, both Roman and Anglican, who make the very existence of the Church dependent upon the ministry, and that ministry constituted in one special form. Thus the tractarian Palmer affirms, that were the order of bishops to become defunct the Church itself would perish, unless Christ, by a new miraculous interposition, restored the lost order. His diction is in striking contrast to that of Hooker (E. P. VII., 5, 8), that the Church has power to take away the authority of the bishops if in their dealings they be found "proud, tyrannical, and unreformable."

At the root of the sacerdotal affirmation lies the failure to discriminate between that which relates to the Church and the ministry in their essential nature and that which pertains to the external form. The great redemptive facts which constitute the Gospel must be distinguished from the subsequent interpre-

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tations of those facts ; the fundamental principles of the Divine revelation from the successive applications of these principles ; the completeness of the Divine teaching from the extent to which that teaching was understood and assimilated, even in the Apostolic Church ; the ideal portraiture in the Scriptures of the Church, which is the realized fullness of Him who filleth all in all, from the measure of the attainments and growth of the infant Christian communities. We must clearly discriminate between the Life which is unchangable, and the changing forms in which the one Life is embodied. Let us keep this distinctly before us, while we enquire first into the origin and then into the functions of the Christian ministry with special reference to the vital and intimate relationship which subsists between it and the Christian people.

Any enquiry into the origin of the ministry must deal with three important questions—the essential nature of the ministry, its external form, and its relation to the congregation.

The ministry, like the Church, is in its essential nature spiritual. Both are constituted upon the same basis. In fact, the ministry is a function of the Church, originating within it by the life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit. Whatever is the basal principle of the Christian life, is also the basal principle of the Christian ministry. There is no difficulty in discovering from the Scriptures what this principle is. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, personal trust in Him, with the obedience which flows from it, is the primary and essential characteristic of a Christian, without which he could not be a Christian in reality, whatever he might be in profession. So the Church itself is, in its essential being, simply the fellowship of believers in Christ.

As the eminent Dr. Jackson, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in the early part of the 17th century, a divine,

whom Dr. Pusey has characterized as "one of the best and greatest minds the Church of England has nurtured," in his brief treatise on the Church declares, "The Catholic Church, in the prime sense, consists only of such men as are actual and indissoluble members of Christ's mystical body, or of such as have the Catholic faith, not only sown in their brains or understandings, but thoroughly rooted in their hearts." He declares "the live members of the Catholic Church" to be "those only in whom Christ dwelleth in faith." So Hooker says "that which linketh Christ to us, is His mere mercy and love towards us. That which tieth us to Him, is our faith in the promised salvation revealed in His word of truth." Hence speaking of the Church he declares that "faith is the ground and glory of all the welfare of this building." Thus the Church is as St. Paul describes it, "The household of faith."

Two typical examples corroborate this definition the one that of him who was the progenitor of the Old Testament Church ; the other that of him who was the chiefest of the Apostles of the New. The grand characteristic of Abraham was his illustrious faith, on account of which he became, in St. Paul's words, the father of all who believe. However prominent the externalism of Judaism seems, yet its true and abiding characteristic lay in what was spiritual. He was not a Jew who was one outwardly. Those who were of Abraham's faith were Abraham's seed. In the days of apostasy the feeble but believing remnant constituted, as the prophets pointed out, the true Israel.

So when, with a divinely taught faith, St. Peter confessed—"Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God"—"Upon this rock" said Jesus, "I will build My Church." The Rock is Christ, believed in and confessed. There is a personal reference to Peter here, not to any official position which he held, but simply to him "as the first New Testament believer, the

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representative of the faith to which the promise was given." (Beyschlag) And this is the more evident when, stumbling at Christ's announcement of His approaching passion, his confession of faith is replaced by an unbelieving protest and Christ sternly rebukes him with the name of Satan.

And this original and fruitful grace of faith as it is the root grace of Christian character, so it is the indispensable foundation of all ministry and service in the Church of Christ. It must be the essential and primary characteristic of a Christian minister, upon which his whole life-work is to be built. This faith which worketh by love is, as Neander points out, the common basis of all Christian graces and capacities. As it is the essence of the whole Christian disposition, so it governs all Christian capabilities. And as in regard to itself, so with respect to all the character and capacity which are its outgrowth, we find that whatever be the qualities and characteristics, the privileges and obligations which belong to the Christian believer, these are the essential attributes of the Christian minister. To him, above all men, Christian character is essential. You cannot in his case, as perhaps in other professions, disassociate the character from the calling. His ministry must be first a life, and then a service. He has no monopoly or peculiarity of privilege in Christ's Church.

To every layman as much as to every clergyman belong the promises of Divine teaching and enlightenment. To every layman as fully and completely as to every minister belong all the privileges of the Christian priesthood, the same direct access to God, the prerogatives of self-sacrifice and of service. Upon every member of Christ's Church rest the same responsibilities and are bestowed the same privileges. In any and all of these respects there is no essential difference between the various members of Christ's Church, whatever be their office or posi-

tion. The ideal of the Church of Christ is, as Bishop Lightfoot asserts, "the religious equality of all." The differences are not absolute but only relative distinctions; differences in degree, not differences in kind. The ministerial calling is simply the intensification of the Christian calling. It is, as an eminent writer on pastoral theology has stated, but "the more special embodiment of the prerogatives and functions which pertain inherently to the Church as Christ's spiritual body." Thus in its inmost being and essential nature, the Christian ministry is not separated from, but identified with the Christian people.

In tracing the doctrinal development of the Reformation it is noteworthy how closely it follows the lines here indicated. The whole of that most fruitful movement had its origin in the principle of faith, the personal trust of the heart in the Redeemer. Luther's doctrine had its subjective ground in the Reformer's religious experience. Liberty and light came to him when he embraced the Divine promise of forgiveness. The warrant of this promise lay in the Word of God, whose alone supreme authority as the one Rule of Faith became the objective principle of the Reformation, maintained in opposition to the sacerdotal assertion of Church authority and tradition. The appropriation of the promise was effected by faith, which laid hold of the God-provided reconciliation and entered into living fellowship with the Reconciler, the alone Mediator Jesus Christ. Thence resulted the subjective principle of the Reformation—justification by faith alone. From the conjunction of these two principles there necessarily resulted the Reformation doctrine of the Church and the ministry. As Dorner, in his searching analysis of the Reformation theology, rightly observes, "The result of the union of the principle of faith with the Holy Scriptures was, according to Luther, first of all the universal priest-

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hood of believers, wherein there lay already a rejection of the Romish doctrine of the priesthood, and of the sacrament of ordination, the Roman Catholic basis of all the sacraments."

What I desire to emphasize is the solidarity of these doctrines. They must stand or fall together. If we maintain the Evangelical doctrine of justification by faith and the sole supremacy of the Scripture, we must also accept the Evangelical and Protestant doctrine of the Church as the fellowship of believers and of the ministry, as the outgrowth of faith. If on the other hand we embrace the sacerdotal doctrine of the ministry as a mediating priesthood, an order separated from the people and the alone channel of grace and pardon, we must equally and necessarily reject that which we believe to be the very pith and marrow of the Gospel, the free and full forgiveness of sins and complete redemption through faith alone in the merits and sufficiency and influence of the Redeemer.

This is a subject in relation to which it is of vital importance that Christian teachers should be clear and definite. There can be no *via media* between the two systems, no logical and consistent position except upon the one side or the other. It is a hopeless task to attempt to construct a *tertium quid* out of materials derived from both; an attempt which can only result in doctrinal obscurity and feebleness, as detrimental to Christian life as it is destructive of genuine Evangelical Churchmanship.

Upon the basis of faith rests, as we have noticed, the whole of receptivity and activity in the gifts of grace. In the living Church of believers, Christ by His spirit raises up and endows with gifts of service and of teaching, men thus made capable of edifying their brethren. Spiritual gifts are the direct bestowal of Him who was exalted to be Head over all to His Church to

give gifts unto men. Love, sympathy, wisdom, aptness to teach, gifts of government and of service are the endowments of the Lord and Spirit of life.

The operation of the Spirit is not arbitrary, but reveals itself in the predominant capability of the individual. This capability may have existed before conversion, but it is now animated by a new power and principle; and hence some gifts consist in the elevation and transformation of natural endowments; others, especially in the primitive and creative epoch of the Church, transcend all ordinary methods and capabilities. The latter were the more wonderful; the former the more valuable and permanent. At first these gifts were exercised with greatest freedom, without any restriction to office. In fact, at the outset, no definite office existed in the Church except that of the Apostles. Their position was unique and peculiar, for they were the personal delegates and representatives of the Lord, appointed by Himself to bear witness to His life and resurrection. Their number was definitely limited to twelve, Matthias taking the place of Judas, and St. Paul being afterwards added to the number. He himself vindicates his apostolate against his Jewish aspersers upon the two-fold ground that he had received his appointment from the Lord himself, and neither from man as its source nor through man as its channel; and that he had seen the risen Jesus, who had appeared unto him and made him a witness to His resurrection.

The apostolic claims were attested by the peculiar powers they possessed, the signs of an Apostle, and the office was in its essential nature unique and intransmissible. The term, however, is in the New Testament applied in a secondary sense to those who were Apostles, that is, delegates of the Churches. Such were Epaphroditus of Philippi, and Junias and Andronicus of Rome. In this sense, too, the term is applied to St. Paul

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himself, in conjunction with Barnabas, as the envoys of the Church of Antioch, its missionaries to the heathen. (See a noteworthy discussion of this point in Prebendary Huxtable's introduction to his commentary on the Galatians.) In illustration of this secondary usage, we find in the recently discovered Didache, the oldest extant Christian writing, the term applied to wandering evangelists, who are not to remain longer than one, or, at most, two days in a place. To remain three days stamped such an one as an imposter; a significant indication that even already the evangelistic office was abused for the purpose of gain. But peculiar as was the apostolate in its special relation to the Lord, its underlying and essential characteristic was a living faith in Jesus. The special fellowship with Christ to which the apostles were called was only possible to men of and faith, through this special fellowship they acquired their unique and indispensable mission.

Under the inspired guidance of the Apostles, the external framework of Church office and organization gradually took form as the need arose. It was developed out of materials pre-existing in the life of the people. Here, as Lechler observes, "the law holds good that creative power lives within, in spirit and personality, and that the external is produced and built up from within."

To trace this development would far exceed the limits now allotted to me. It must suffice simply to point out its nature and order, and to emphasize the conclusion which the whole tendency of critical study and research confirms and elucidates. Thus, not only is ministerial service in its basal principle identified with all Christian life and service, but also the very forms of office and external organization, in which that service is rendered, are derived from the social and political life of the people.

Still more, when we investigate the entrance of the minister upon the office which he holds, we find additional indications of the close relationship subsisting between the ministry and the people.

Let us take for example the appointment of the seven recorded in Acts vi. These seven are nowhere called "deacons," yet they are regarded as such by the majority of interpreters, and if this be not the case, we have no account whatever of the origin of the diaconate. We may reasonably grant the identification which is so largely acquiesced in. Observe how every point I have already indicated is here corroborated. The Church appears as a community of believers in Christ, a solidarity of life in Him. Through their union with Him, they are brought into fellowship with one another. Out of the purely internal community of faith and life arises the external association, but at first undefined and formless. Here we have the first recorded step towards definite organization, originating in the complaints of the Hellenists and the necessity for a better administration of the gifts of love spontaneously provided by the Church for its needy members. The office established was simply a transference to the Church of an existing Jewish institution, as Professor Lumby, of Oxford, notices, and as Schurer, in his learned investigations into the antiquities of the Jewish nation, has demonstrated. The Talmud refers to the seven leading men of the city, called frequently "the seven good men," as constituting a board for the management of its affairs; and Josephus refers to certain local courts which consisted of seven persons. The men chosen for the office were to be men "full of the Holy Ghost and Wisdom," according to the apostolic injunction, or, as they are subsequently described, men "full of faith." Thus this basal and indispensable qualification appears upon the forefront of this first step in organization.

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This analysis brings out very emphatically the two points I have already referred to. First, that the origin of the diaconate as to its essential nature lies in the receptive faith and the gifts of service bestowed by Christ himself, and secondly, that the diaconate, as far as its external form, originated in pre-existing elements in the life of the people. An analysis of the presbyterate, or of the episcopate, would yield the same results. Now another remarkable element is pressed upon our notice. The people were called upon to look out seven men of good report. And so the seven were chosen and attested by the people. Two things are here distinctly indicated—attestation and election. The same attestation is asserted in the case of the Presbyters. Timothy, for example, was "well reported of by the brethren." To those qualified and endowed by the Head of the Church for the work of the ministry, the visible Church gives outward and formal recognition and authorization. When our own Church for example, sets apart any one to the ministry, she assumes that Christ has already called and endowed him by His spirit, and upon his profession that he has been so called she solemnly ordains him to the work. The spiritual gifts of ministry are from Christ himself, the visible Church only attests their existence and regulates the external order in which they are to be exercised.

Ordination is not the impartation, but the recognition of ministerial gifts, and the conferring of authority to use them for the edification of the Church. Thus Hooker (E. P. V., 78) says: "Out of men thus endued with the gifts of the Spirit upon their conversion to the Christian faith, the Church had her ministers chosen, unto whom is given ecclesiastical power by ordination." But upon the attestation of the Church there followed the election. So in the case of Presbyters, we read, as Dean Alford observes in his comments upon Acts xiv. 23, that

the Apostles ordained as Presbyters those whom the Church elected. Clement, of Rome, writing at the close of the first century to the Corinthians, speaks of Presbyters ordained by the Apostles with the common assent and approbation of the whole Church. In this freedom of choice the Christian Church followed the precedence of the Jewish synagogue, whose office bearers were elected by the people, and in which the humblest Israelite with piety and gifts might attain to the highest position. Although this primitive right of the Christian people was gradually encroached upon, yet until the middle of the sixth century the laity continued to have a voice and vote in the choice both of bishops and of presbyters.

At the Reformation this right was re-asserted, although in our own Church obscured by that system of patronage which originated in the feudalism of the middle ages; but notwithstanding this obscurity Hooker (E. P. VII., 14, 12) maintains that "neither is there in the Church of England any man, by order of law, possessed with pastoral charge over any parish, but the people in effect do choose him thereto." To the primitive exercise of this fundamental prerogative of the Christian people, I will now cite two testimonies from the Church of Rome, not the less significant because of the character of the witnesses. The Reformers appealed in support of the laity to the choice of their pastors to certain passages in the ancient liturgies and service-books, especially to the Roman Pontificale, in which are clear and indisputable testimonies to the primitive principle of election. At the council of Trent a Canon of Valentia admitted the primitive rule of election, which he maintained had been justly set aside by Papal authority and proposed to expunge the passages referred to from the service-book. But this the council feared to do lest the very act of expurgation would add to the force of the testimony, and con-

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tented itself with anathematizing the heresy, as it viewed it, that the people's consent was an inviolable right.

In the early part of the present century the French Bishop Gregoire, of Blois, in his able defence of the Gallican liberties, sums up his argument in these emphatic words : " Natural and Divine right, Apostolic traditions, the universal discipline of the primitive Church, the canons of councils, the decisions of the Popes, the maxims of the holy fathers, all proclaim as inalienable the right of the faithful to have for their guides in the way of salvation none but those men whom they have chosen, or at least the choice of whom they have invited and ratified by their suffrages."

The consensus of testimony to this primitive right is remarkable. The choice of their pastors is an inalienable prerogative of the laity, a fundamental principle of churchmanship.

From three distinct points of view we have now regarded the origin of the ministry and of the pastoral relation. First, that of its inmost and essential nature ; secondly, the external form of its organization ; and thirdly, the direct connection of the minister with the congregation, as the result of its choice and election of him. From all these it is evident that the true character of the ministry is not that of a sacerdotal order upon whose mediation the Church is dependent for grace and life, but rather that of an organ of the body whence it emanates, and for whose welfare it performs the functions to which it is specifically devoted.

The consideration of these functions will be found to corroborate the view here taken of the vital connection and interdependence which exists between clergy and laity.

In our analysis of the functions of the three-fold ministry we must carefully distinguish between the essential idea and principle of each order, and the external form in which it is embod-

ied. We have already seen that faith in Christ is the fundamental principle which underlies the whole conception and compass of Christian ministry. This faith reveals itself in confession, that is, the external manifestation in the life of the ruling principle in the heart. This confession assumes two forms—the service of love and the witness to truth. Every genuine believer in Christ is impelled by the instinct of the life of which he is made partaker, to work for Christ and to witness for Christ. He becomes a co-worker with Christ, whose gracious activities are simply and expressively summed up in St. Peter's terse utterance, "He went about doing good." The ministries of help and healing, the offices and activities of Christian beneficence devolve upon every Christian, according to his ability and opportunities. None are exempt from these responsibilities, none possess a monopoly of these privileges. Now it was in this sphere of Christian service that the diaconate originated. The word itself simply means "service," and was emphatically applied to the organized office devoted to the services of charity. The diaconate was in its conception and intention an eleemosynary office.

It was, as Bishop Lightfoot points out, "essentially a serving of tables," as distinguished from the higher functions of preaching and instruction. Whenever deacons, like Stephen, took part in the work of teaching, it is traceable rather to the capacity of the individual than to the functions of the office. It is corroborative of this conception of the essential idea of the diaconate, that in the early church it prospered so long as it was faithful to this work of love; but as soon as the ministrations of charity passed from it to the hospitals and other channels of beneficence, the order, as Uhlhorn observes, began to fall into decay. The same causes have been at work in our own Church, where the diaconate has to a large extent lost its

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distinctive features and become merely a licentiate for the ministry, or has been almost altogether identified in its position and duties with the presbyterate.

In its distinctive and essential character of a ministry of Christian love the diaconate differs nothing in kind, but only in degree, from the ministry of love to which all Christians are called. It possesses no monopoly of service, but simply a leadership.

Moreover, the conception of service which distinguishes the diaconate inheres in the whole ministry, whatever be the office or order. It is, as Beza said, not a *magisterium* but a *ministerium*, not a magistracy but a ministry. Its spirit is to be not that of self-assertion and self-exaltation, but of self-devotedness and self-abandonment, the very spirit of Jesus, who declares that He came not to be ministered unto (*diakonēthēnai*) but to minister (*diakonēsai*) and who said, "whosever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (*diakonos*). And we find St. Paul rebuking the ambitious contentions of the Corinthians by emphatic assertion of the same fundamental conception of office in the Church, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers (*diakonoî*) through whom ye believed?" And St. Peter indignantly deprecates the "lording it over God's heritage." The history of the word here rendered "heritage," furnishes a curious illustration of the perversions of true Church order. Here it is the laity who are God's *clerus*, His portion and inheritance. But in time as the Church became identified with the clergy (and we have a curious relic of this misconception in the phrase "to enter the Church," applied to admission to the Christian ministry), the term was transferred from the congregation to the ministers, who were supposed to be in some unique and special sense the clerisy of God, and hence the later use of the term "clergy."

Of this radically anti-Christian conception the growth was rapid, until it overspread Christendom with its baneful up-shadow. But it was left to the Church of Rome, in its counter-Reformation, at the Council of Trent, to reduce it to a dogma and embody it in a canon stamped with the odious name of "hierarchy;" while Cardinal Ballarmino sums up the Romish doctrine on the relation of the clergy to the laity in these words: "It has always been believed in the Catholic Church, that the bishops and their dioceses, and the Roman pontiff in the whole Church, are real ecclesiastical princes, competent by their own authority and without the consent of the people or the advice of the presbyters, to enact laws binding upon the conscience, to judge in causes ecclesiastical and if need be, to inflict punishment."

The conception of the ministry as a service, not a lordship, is in entire harmony with those representations which describe it as a leadership. It is a rulership modelled after Christ's, a divine prerogative of doing and suffering for the sake of others. It is founded on self-sacrifice, not on self-assertion, and its methods are the persuasions of love and truth, not the enforcements of power, and of legal constraint. "Remember," said the writer of the Hebrews, chap. xiii. 7, "them that have the rule over you," your *hēgoumenoi*, leaders. And the Master defined the leadership, "let your leader be as one that serveth," Luke xxii. 26,—*ho hēgoumenos hōs ho diakonōn*. And the ground of this injunction He placed in His own mission and example, "I am among you as one that serveth."

This ruling is a constitutional government, not a despotism. In its administration it can as little be the clergy without the laity as the laity without the clergy. In the Church, before sacerdotalism obliterated its liberties, in addition to the rights of the laity in the choice of pastors they possessed two other prim-

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itive prerogatives. One was their free admission to the deliberative assemblies of the Church, a right which even Cyprian, the chief promoter of episcopal absolutism, conceded. The other was the exercise of discipline, the power of inflicting Church censures, which was vested not in the clergy alone, but in the whole Church. For "in truth," as Hooker declares, "the whole body of the Church is the first original subject of all mandatory and coercive power within itself."

Let us now turn to the second form in which the Christian confession of faith is embodied, that of witness to the truth. The Church is made up of those "who believe and know the truth." And he who believes with the heart must, as St. Paul declares, make confession with the mouth. It is the bounden duty of every one who knows the truth to bear witness to it both in word and in deed, both in speech and in character. In the early Church in the fervour of its first love, we find that this witness bearing was not limited as it now very generally is, so far as its lay members, to the silent testimony of the life, or the quiet word of exhortation or of sympathy spoken as by friend to friend. It is of the brethren that it is said, they went everywhere preaching the Word. As, with the Bereans and Thessalonians, they were called upon to test all teaching, so also they not only held fast what was true, but actively propagated it. The liberty of prophesying which prevailed in the synagogue, continued in the Church. Laymen freely taught and preached. The ministers of Christ possessed no monopoly in this respect. Yet their office was distinctively and pre-eminently a ministry of the Word. To this corresponds St. Paul's definition of it, "Stewards of the mysteries of God." They were those who in a special and pre-eminent sense were put in trust with revealed truth, the Gospel of Truth, for such is the force of the word "mystery" in the Pauline epistles. Just as in the case of

the diaconate, we find a correspondence between its specific function and the service of charity to which all Christians are called ; so in the case of the presbyterate, there is a similar correspondence between its functions of teaching and preaching and the witness-bearing which is the privilege of every one who knows the truth.

Nor is this inconsistent with the fact that the presbyters were rulers as well as instructors. As Bishop Lightfoot says, "Although government was probably the first conception of the office, yet the work of teaching must have fallen to the office from the very first and have assumed greater prominence as time went on." The ruling itself was but the application of the truth to the conscience. It was effected partly by direct teaching and exhortation, and partly by the influences of leadership and example. The rulers were pastors and guides, and the sheep were at once led and fed. It was by the presentation of the truth and not by the assertion of authority that they directed the flock. It was to the truth and to Christ Himself who is the truth, and not to themselves nor to any mere external authority that they sought to bring men into subjection.

The term "hierarchy" embodies two errors. The one makes the ministry a magistracy, the other makes it a ruling and mediating priesthood. The first, as we have seen, is in direct opposition to the conception of the ministry as a service of love. The other is in opposition to the second fundamental idea of the ministry as a teaching pastorate, bearing witness to the truth. In support of this sacerdotal conception two remarkable passages in the Gospels are frequently misapplied. I refer to the Lord's words in Matt. xvi. 19, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." And again in John xx. 23, "Whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them,

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whosoever sins ye retain they are retained." Yet no passages of Holy Writ could be more decisively opposed to sacerdotalism. They confer no peculiar prerogatives upon any one class in the Church, be they apostles or bishops or presbyters. The powers, prerogatives and privileges they set forth are those of the whole body of Christian people. The first was spoken primarily to St. Peter, but to him as the representative believer in Christ, and we find it repeated in Matt. xviii. 18, and applied to all the brethren, those whom St. Peter himself describes as "them that have obtained like precious faith." So the words in St. John were spoken not to the apostles alone, but also to others assembled with them, as St. Luke informs us. Accordingly Canon Westcott affirms, "The commission and the promise were given to the Christian society and not to any special order in it." "Thus the words are," he repeats, "the charter of the Christian Church, and not simply the charter of the Christian ministry." Whatever be the powers and privileges here dealt with, they belong to the whole Church, and not to any particular class or order within it. And not only so, these powers and privileges are conditioned upon certain necessary qualifications which inhere in the Christian character. Those to whom is given the power to bind and to loose are believers. It was Peter's faith which was the fundamental matter in Christ's mind. The key entrusted to him, as Neander says, was "the truth to which he had first testified and which he was afterwards to proclaim." And it was by faith he received this truth, and to all who possess the same faith the same truth is entrusted.

Faith, the receptive spiritual faculty, is ever accompanied by the great gift for whose bestowal it is the one condition: "He that believeth hath eternal life." Those to whom the power of remitting and retaining is given are those who are partakers of the life. When Christ appeared in the midst of the assembled

disciples on the evening of the Resurrection Day, He breathed upon them. It was the symbol of the communication of the new life, the gift of the Spirit, a gift which proceeds to us from the person of Jesus Himself. Following the impartation of this new being, came the forgiveness and the retention of sins. Thus we see that the power set forth in both announcements of Christ are bestowed upon the same persons, the living members of Christ's Church, the believers in Him. "Peter," says St. Augustine, "represents all good men, and the promise in St. John is addressed to all believers everywhere."

The powers themselves are strikingly analogous. They are in both cases powers of discrimination and judgment, but in the one case regard is had to the principles of right and wrong, and in the other case, to actions, transgressions of these principles. To "bind" and to "loose" were phrases in constant use in the Jewish synagogues and Rabbinical schools, and as such were familiar to the disciples. They meant simply to "forbid" and to "permit." There is here assured to believers in Christ the exercise of a wise discrimination, a true spiritual judgment to discern between good and evil, right and wrong, and to permit or to forbid in accordance therewith.

It is the judging power of an enlightened Christian conscience, the spiritual discernment bestowed upon believers in Christ, the insight into truth and character given to all who obey the Gospel and who are partakers of the Spirit of Christ. This, Origen claims to be the true power of the keys, a power exercised not only by the Christian minister, but by the Christian man whoever he may be. This it is that constitutes the power of a wholesome Christian opinion whenever such has been exercised in the condemnation of abuses and in the promotion of reform. Such a power has been exemplified in the present century in the abolition of slavery, the promotion of temperance and of purity,

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But it may be asked, have the texts cited, especially that from St. John, no direct bearing upon the Christian ministry? Doubtless they have upon the ministry as the outcome and embodiment in its essential nature of the life, and privileges and responsibilities of the Christian people; but they in no wise belong to the ministry in any exclusive sense, as investing it with prerogatives essentially different from those belonging to all believers in Christ.

Only upon the Evangelical ground can the use of the words in the ordinal be justified. And it must be borne in mind that their position there is a medieval interpolation, without any precedent in ancient and catholic usage. They were never used in the ordination of presbyters until the latter half of the 13th century, as Morinus the Roman canonist has shown. When our Reformers carefully excluded from the ordinal the rites and words which in the Roman use were supposed to confer the sacerdotal power; when they expunged the word "altar" from the Prayer Book and commanded "altars" in the churches to be everywhere taken down, when they declared as Hooker does that "sacrifice is now no part of the Christian ministry," when

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cial form, of the privileges and responsibilities which belong to all Christians. Words addressed by our Lord to the whole body of believers may be very fittingly addressed to those who are called to represent them as well in the inner life of faith and in Christian character which springs from faith, as in the common service of love and testimony to the truth,—a service and a testimony in which they cannot claim a monopoly, but simply a leadership.

Moreover the words—"Receive the Holy Ghost" are, as Archbishop Whitgift observes, a prayer; and this is in keeping with St. Augustine's explanation of the laying on of hands, "What else is it," he asks, "but prayer over the man?"

Absolution is but the application of the Gospel to the individual. The outward and formal declaration of forgiveness is properly made by those who are appointed officers of the Christian community, but its truthfulness and its efficacy depend not upon official position, but upon spiritual enlightenment. The clergyman needs as much the advice and forgiveness of the layman, as the layman of the clergyman, and brother of brother throughout the Church. The apostle's injunction is, "confess your

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faults one to another." In the Roman missal itself there is contained a significant testimony to this primitive truth and a remarkable rebuke of the error in the midst of which it has been suffered to stand. There, in the Mass itself, the very climax of sacerdotal assumption, the priest first confesses his sins to the people and they absolve him in the very same words which he uses when they in their turn have confessed their sins to him.

How plain it is that the essential idea of the office and work of the presbyter is directly opposed to the error which makes the ministry a mediating and sacrificing priesthood, just as the essential idea of the diaconate is opposed to the kindred error which would make the ministry a lordship and a hierarchy.

These two orders, that of the diaconate and the presbyterate, were distinct from their conception. But the Church early arrived at a critical epoch. The situation is well described by Rothe—the loss of apostolic leadership, the growing dissensions between the Jewish and Gentile brethren, the menacing opposition of heresy, continued to enforce the necessity for some stronger external organization to bind together the scattered congregations. Out of the necessity arose the episcopate, developed from the presbyterate, and as Bishop Lightfoot agrees, not suddenly and universally as by an apostolic edict, but progressively and gradually as by a natural and inevitable development. Thus centralization and superintendency were secured. As the presbyter was the embodiment of the congregation so the bishop was the embodiment of the presbyters. As the presbyters were the leaders of the people, so the bishop was the leader of the presbyters. They are pastors: he is the chief pastor. His relation to them is similar to their relation to their flocks. The difference throughout is that of degree, not of kind. There is no idea of a sacerdotal caste, which is as unsupported by history as it is opposed to the New Testament teaching.

This affinity of the bishop to the presbyter is admitted even by those who trace the episcopate downwards from the apostolate, and not upwards from the presbyterate. Thus the tractarian Palmer in his treatise on the Church, says "If we divide the sacred ministry according to its *degrees* instituted by God and understand the word 'order' in the sense of '*degree*,' we may truly say that there are *three* orders in the sacred ministry, but if we distribute it according to its *nature*, we may say that there are only *two* orders, viz., bishops or presbyters, and deacons, for pastors of the first and second degrees exercise a ministry of the same nature. In the power of ordination alone do the ministers of the first degree differ absolutely from the second, and therefore may be considered, in general, as of the same order." In fact, Palmer here but asserts the old scholastic theory that bishops and presbyters differ in degree, not in order. This was the view held by the principal divines of the Church of Rome down to the Council of Trent; it was the view also of our own reformers and divines until the beginning of the 17th century, and held among others by Cranmer, Hooker, Jewel, Pilkington, Field, and Usher. The latter indeed says, "I have ever declared my opinion to be that *episcopus et presbyter gradu tantum differunt, non ordine*." Upon this ground all these divines maintained the validity of non-episcopal orders.

But into this question it is not now necessary to enter. My present purpose is to point out what constitutes the inmost nature and essential character of the Christian ministry in all its offices, to show that it is neither a hierarchy nor a sacerdotium, but a pastorate, whose characteristics are the special embodiment, intensification and manifestation of the same qualities and attributes which lie at the basis of all Christian life, character, and work.

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The view I have briefly outlined of the origin and functions of the Christian ministry is in complete harmony with its aim and object, which is not to keep the laity dependent upon the ministry but to make them more and more dependent upon Christ alone. Its aim is to bring the flock into all the completeness of Christian character, and the maturity of Christian knowledge, in a word, as St. Paul expresses it, "to present every man perfect in Christ." And not only so, but in its own special work the ministry is ever seeking to enlist the whole congregation, so far as it has gifts and opportunities, to be co-workers in Christian service and Christian teaching. This St. Paul expressly states, according to what I doubt not to be the correct rendering of Eph. iv. 12, "Himself gave some to be Apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, with a view to the equipment of the saints for their work of service, for the upbuilding of the Body of Christ." As Moule admirably states it, "The Divine gift of a Christian ministry is to have its effect above all things in the fitting of the saints (true believers in general), for active service for the common Lord."

Thus the very purpose of the official ministry is the perfecting of the saints in the work of Christian service, the bringing of Christians into the maturity of Christian manhood; while the aim and tendency of sacerdotalism is to keep the laity in a state of perpetual pupilage, of uncertainty as to their reconciliation with God and of dependence upon the priesthood. As Dorner has not a whit too strongly expressed it, the economy of salvation became in the Church of Rome, "a systematized arrangement for keeping the individual in uncertainty about his salvation." Obedience to the hierarchy takes the place of obedience to the truth in its self-evidencing power. Dependence upon God is changed into bondage to men; and a magical supersti-

tion is substituted for a reasonable religion. The Reformation in bringing men back into that direct dependence upon and immediate access to God, which is the privilege of all Christians, liberated them from the priestly despotism, and restored the doctrine of the ministry to its primitive simplicity.

And this revolution was as much for the exaltation of the clergy as for the enfranchisement of the laity. It conferred upon them personally the same blessed liberty of truth that it conferred upon the laity. For both were equally in bondage to the system of external authority and sacerdotal uncertainty. The cleric was no more allowed to think for himself than the layman; he could personally attain to no greater certainty of truth or assurance of forgiveness. He was degraded into a mere functionary and a manipulator of rites. The elevation given to the priesthood was a spurious and worldly exaltation, which was destructive both of moral and intellectual excellency. The Evangelical doctrine of the ministry gives to it the true and ennobling elevation of spiritual and intellectual leadership, in relation to Christian character, Christian truth, and Christian work. Such an ideal cannot indeed win the love, although it may compel the respect of the worldly.

But how deep and sincere will be the voluntary tribute of gratitude and of affection which a truly spiritual ministry wins from the people whom it leads and feeds, and to whom it dispenses the word of Life; how ready and generous will be the provision such a people makes in temporal things for those who minister unto them in spiritual things. If a ministry fails in those characteristics which ought to mark it, according to the Apostolic standard, we need not wonder if it forfeits the genuine love and reverence which such characteristics ever win. And on the other hand, we cannot be surprised if such a degenerate ministry, just in proportion to its failure to realize its true

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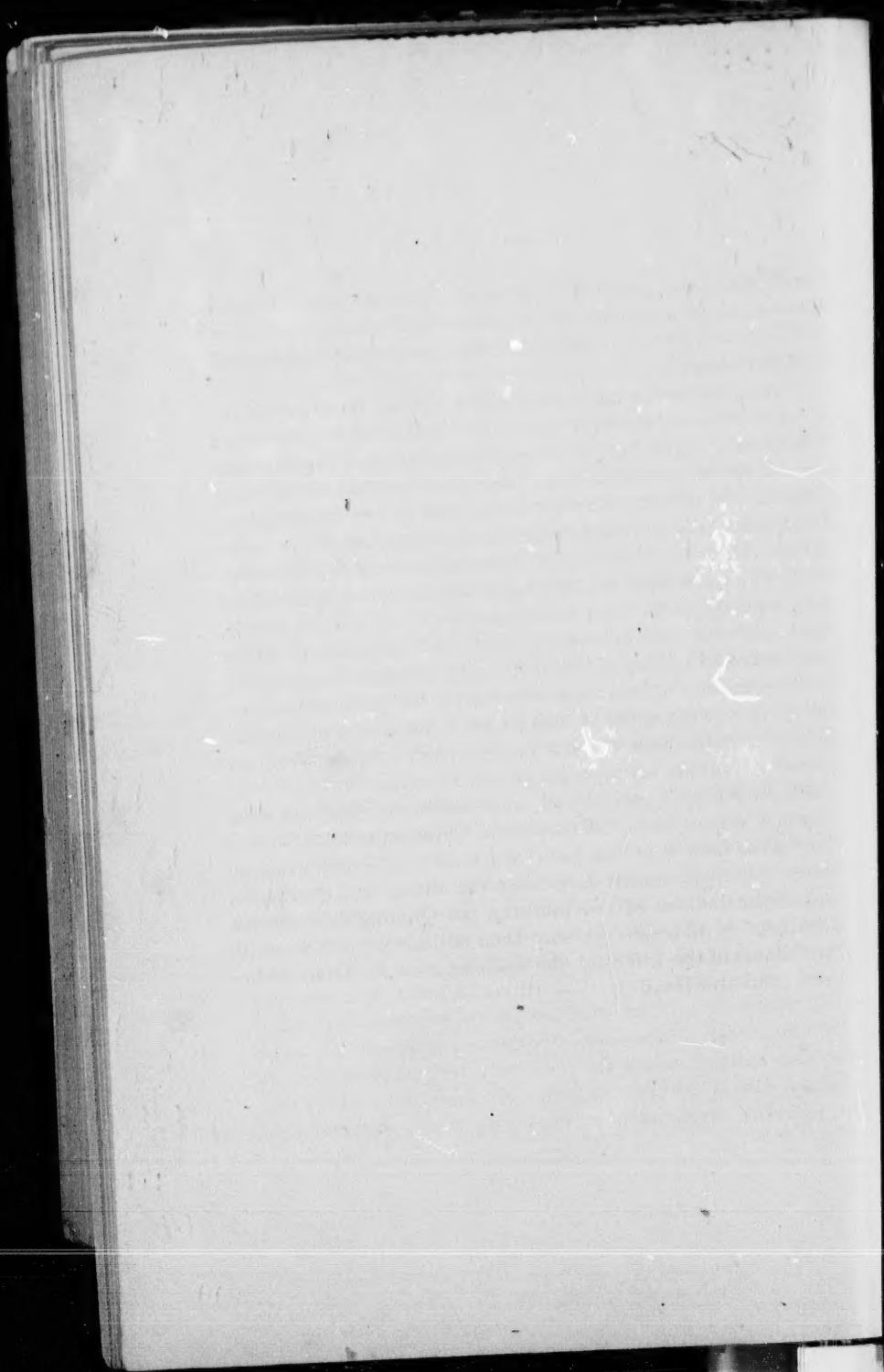
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ideal, puts forth pretensions to a spurious and anti-Christian priesthood, which is the direct outcome of a low standard of Christian life and a low measure of Christian knowledge and enlightenment.

What a disastrous effect must such a conception of the ministerial office have, not only upon the office itself, but also upon the whole Church, and through the Church upon the common wealth, for sacerdotalism is as inimical to civil as to religious liberty. On the other hand, the true ideal of the sacred ministry will not only stimulate those who are called to the grandest of services, to seek after the highest attainments in Christ-likeness of character and of work, but it will also bring the ministry into the most harmonious and efficient relations with the people. And only where such harmony exists with its beauty of Christian order and solidity of Christian unity, can any Church rightly fulfil its mission to its own members, or to the sinful and sorrowful world into the midst of which Christ has sent it to carry on His mission, to bear witness to His truth, and to bring the perishing into the saving fellowship of His grace.

Only when both clergy and laity realize the import of what Canon Westcott calls "the universal Christian mission"—"As the Father hath sent me, even so I send you,"—only when all unite to fulfil it, neither forgetting the duties, and privileges, and responsibilities of the ministry, nor ignoring the common priesthood of all believers; only then will the Church know all the fullness of the Life and the sufficiency of the Grace of her risen Lord and Head.



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